A SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Book Twelve

FORGIVENESS, REWARDS, AND THE JUDGMENT

TO COME

The Release of the Debt — The Fire That Tests Every Work — The Final Charge

"*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;*

that every one may receive the things done in his body,

according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

2 Corinthians 5:10

"*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth:*

but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

Isaiah 40:8

The Final Volume of the Scriptural Instruction Manual

King James Version

Preface: What Lies Ahead of Every Believer

Book Twelve brings the Scriptural Instruction Manual to its close. The subjects of this final volume are not supplementary topics added at the end for completeness. They are the eschatological horizon toward which every other subject in the manual points:

- Forgiveness: what the believer must extend to others because of what God has extended to them — and the spiritual consequences of refusing to extend it.
- Rewards and the judgment of works: the distinction between salvation and the evaluation of the believer's labor, the fire that will test every work, and the posture of persevering faith that neither presumes on security nor collapses into despair.
- The concluding charge: the three-part address that closes the Master Volume, speaking directly to the ordained minister, the scholar, and every reader — reproduced here as the manual's final word. Everything in this manual has been preparation for what lies ahead. The salvation doctrine of Books Two through Five, the church order of Books Eight and Nine, the household standards of Book Ten, the stewardship of Book Eleven — all of it will one day pass through the fire of 1 Corinthians 3. What was built on the foundation of Christ, in faith, in truth, motivated by love for God and neighbor, will endure. What was built for reputation, comfort, or institutional approval will not. The believer who has absorbed the teaching of this manual and built upon it faithfully will stand before the judgment seat of Christ with something to show. The minister who has handled the Word with precision, who has taught the covenant's full demands without softening, who has shepherded souls toward the apostolic standard at personal cost — that minister will hear words that make every difficulty worthwhile. All doctrinal positions in this manual are intended to be tested — not accepted on the authority of this volume, but verified against the full counsel of Scripture by the reader. That instruction, given at the close of the Master Volume, is the most important thing in it.

Part One: Forgiveness — The Release of the Debt

Chapter One: Forgiveness Defined

The biblical vocabulary of forgiveness is not drawn from the world of sentiment or therapeutic healing. It is drawn from the world of commerce and law. The Greek word most commonly translated forgiveness — aphiemi (ἀφίημι) — carries the primary meaning of release, dismissal, or letting go, as one releases a debtor from a financial obligation. To forgive is a transactional act — a deliberate cancellation of a legitimate claim.

1.1 The Commercial and Legal Background

> **Luke 11:4**
>
> "*And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.*"
>
> **Matthew 18:27**
>
> "*Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.*"

The Lord's Prayer frames the relationship between God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others in explicitly commercial terms: debts, the indebted. The parable of Matthew 18:23--35 — the unforgiving servant — extends this framework through a complete narrative. A servant owes his master ten thousand talents — a sum so astronomical it is impossible to repay. The master forgives the entire debt. That servant then goes and demands repayment of a hundred pence from a fellow servant. The disproportion is the point: what we have been forgiven by God renders any debt another person owes us utterly negligible by comparison.

To forgive, in the scriptural vocabulary, is:

- To cancel the debt — to relinquish the legal claim to repayment for what was taken, damaged, or destroyed.
- To release the debtor — not to hold them bound to an obligation they can no longer fulfill.
- To absorb the loss — what is forgiven is not extracted from the offender; it is borne by the forgiver. This is what makes forgiveness costly and what makes God's forgiveness through the cross the supreme act of forgiveness in the universe: the loss was absorbed by God himself in the person of his Son.

1.2 Forgiveness as an Act of the Will

Forgiveness is not a feeling. It is not a state of emotional warmth toward the offender. It is not the disappearance of pain. It is a deliberate act of the will — the conscious decision to release the claim, to cancel the debt, to refuse to pursue payment for what was done.

This distinction is critical for the pastoral handling of forgiveness.

The person who has been deeply wounded — through betrayal, abuse, loss, or injustice — may experience the full emotional weight of what happened for years after they have genuinely forgiven. The emotional residue of deep wounds does not indicate that forgiveness has not occurred or has been revoked. Forgiveness is complete the moment the will releases the claim. The healing of the emotions that follow is a separate process, often much slower, that continues after the act of forgiveness has been accomplished.

The Critical Distinction

> *Forgiveness is the act of releasing the debt — a completed decision of the will. Healing is the process of recovering from the wound — an ongoing work of the Spirit over time. The first is commanded immediately and unconditionally. The second is a gift of grace that comes as the Spirit works, often gradually, in the aftermath of genuine forgiveness. Confusing the two produces either the demand that healing occur instantly (which*

> *it cannot) or the conclusion that ongoing pain means forgiveness has not occurred (which it may not mean).*

1.3 The Theological Ground: What We Have Been Forgiven

> **Ephesians 4:32**
>
> "*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*"
>
> **Colossians 3:13**
>
> "*Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*"

Both Paul texts ground the command to forgive in the same reality: the forgiveness God has extended to us in Christ. The measure and the motivation are identical. We forgive as Christ forgave. We forgive because we have been forgiven.

The man who withholds forgiveness from another person while claiming God's forgiveness for himself has not yet understood what he has been forgiven. He owes ten thousand talents and has been forgiven the whole sum. His debtor owes him a hundred pence. The disproportion of Matthew 18:23--35 is not rhetorical exaggeration; it is the most accurate account of the actual moral arithmetic of the situation. Whatever wrong any human being has done to another human being is, in comparison with what we have done against God and been forgiven for, a hundred pence.

The one who has genuinely seen the ten thousand talents cannot in good conscience pursue the hundred.

Chapter Two: What Forgiveness Is Not

The command to forgive is one of the most consistently misunderstood commands in the New Testament — distorted in two directions. Some have

used it to demand the impossible: instant emotional recovery, the erasure of memory, the pretense that serious wrongs never happened.

Others have used the difficulty of forgiveness as a reason never to extend it, accumulating bitterness while claiming a theological warrant they do not possess. Both distortions harm the people who hold them and the communities they live in.

2.1 Four Things Forgiveness Is Not

Forgiveness Is Not Condoning the Offense

To forgive someone does not declare that what they did was acceptable.

Isaiah 5:20 pronounces woe on those who call evil good. God does not do this. When God forgives, he does not revise his assessment of what was done; he absorbs the cost of it in the cross. The forgiver who releases the debt has not said 'it was acceptable'; he has said 'I will not demand payment.' The wrong remains wrong. The debt is cancelled.

This distinction is pastorally vital for those who have experienced genuine evil — abuse, betrayal, violent crime. The command to forgive is not the command to pretend the evil was not evil. It is the command to release the claim against the person who did it. The two are entirely different, and conflating them makes forgiveness feel like a second violation.

Forgiveness Is Not Pretending It Never Happened

God forgave David for his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. Then Nathan delivered God's full account of the consequences David would bear: the sword would not depart from his house; his wives would be taken before his eyes; his son by Bathsheba would die (2 Samuel 12:9--13). God's forgiveness did not eliminate the record, the consequences, or the truthful account of what was done. Forgiveness cancels the debt; it does not rewrite history.

The survivor of abuse who is told to forgive and therefore never mention what happened again has been given a false instruction. Forgiveness does

not require silence about the truth. It requires the release of the right to pursue payment — which is entirely compatible with honest acknowledgment of what occurred, the setting of appropriate boundaries, and the pursuit of justice through legitimate means.

Forgiveness Is Not the Removal of All Boundaries

> **Proverbs 22:3**
>
> "*A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.*"

Wisdom, including wise self-protection, is entirely consistent with genuine forgiveness. The person who has forgiven a thief is not required to leave their house unlocked. The person who has forgiven an abuser is not required to continue living with them. Galatians 6:7 — 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' — establishes that actions have natural consequences that forgiveness does not suspend. Prudent self-protection after genuine forgiveness is not a failure to forgive; it is wisdom about how to live in a fallen world with genuinely fallible people.

Trust is rebuilt over time through demonstrated change. Forgiveness releases the debt immediately. Restored relationship — including the restoration of appropriate trust — is a separate process that requires the active cooperation of both parties and the evidence of genuine repentance over time. The forgiving person is not obligated to restore trust before it has been merited by demonstrated change.

Forgiveness Is Not Automatic Pardon of Ongoing Willful Sin

God's forgiveness is always accompanied by the call to turn from sin. 'Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more' (John 8:11).

Forgiveness does not give permission to continue in the behavior that required it. The person who claims forgiveness as license to repeat the offense has not received forgiveness in any meaningful sense; they have treated the cross as permission for what it was the cost of.

This is also relevant to the pastoral counsel of those who have been harmed. The person who has genuinely repented — whose repentance is evidenced over time, whose life demonstrates the change they profess — has a legitimate claim on the forgiveness the New Testament requires.

The person who repeats the same offense, apologizes, and expects immediate restoration to the same position of trust has not understood repentance and may be manipulating the language of forgiveness for personal convenience.

Chapter Three: Internal Release and Restored Relationship

3.1 The Unconditional Command

> **Matthew 6:14--15**
>
> "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*"
>
> **Mark 11:25**
>
> "*And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*"

The command to forgive is unconditional in one specific and decisive respect: the internal release of the debt — the abandonment of bitterness and the refusal to pursue payment in the heart — is commanded regardless of the offender's repentance or response. Christ does not say 'forgive if they apologize.' He does not say 'forgive when they have adequately demonstrated remorse.' He says: 'forgive, if ye have ought against any, when ye stand praying.' This is the dimension of forgiveness that is entirely within the believer's own spiritual domain, requiring no cooperation from the offender. The debt is released in the will, before God, in the act of prayer. Whether the offender ever acknowledges the debt, whether they ever

apologize, whether the relationship is ever restored — none of these conditions govern the internal act of forgiveness. The believer forgives because they have been forgiven, and because bitterness will destroy the forgiver before it touches the offender.

3.2 The Danger of Bitterness

> **Hebrews 12:15**
>
> "*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.*"
>
> **Ephesians 4:31--32**
>
> "*Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*"

The writer to the Hebrews describes bitterness as a root — something underground, hidden from the surface view, but actively growing and spreading. The bitter person may maintain a composed exterior while the root of bitterness spreads through their inner life, corrupting their prayer, their worship, their relationships, and their capacity for genuine love. The image of a root also captures the destructive patience of bitterness: it does not require a dramatic incident to do its work; it simply continues to grow underground until it surfaces and defiles everything around it.

Bitterness is a poison the bitter person drinks expecting the other to die. This is the precise irony of unforgiveness: the person who withholds forgiveness is typically more damaged by the withholding than the person from whom it is withheld. The offender may be entirely unaware that the bitterness continues. The offended person is living with it daily. The spiritual, relational, and physical consequences of sustained bitterness fall primarily on the one who carries it.

3.3 The Distinction: Internal Forgiveness vs. Restored Relationship

The New Testament maintains a consistent distinction between two things that are frequently conflated:

> **Internal forgiveness —** The release of the debt before God, in the will, unconditionally. This is commanded immediately and does not require the offender's response. It is entirely within the believer's own spiritual domain.
>
> **Restored relationship —** The re-establishment of trust, proximity, and covenant connection between the forgiver and the offender. This requires the active cooperation of both parties. It is not commanded unconditionally; it is a process that follows genuine repentance and is governed by wisdom about the particular relationship.

Luke 17:3--4 establishes both sides of this distinction: 'If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.' The conditional — 'if he repent' — governs the relational dimension of forgiveness, not the internal one. The internal release of bitterness is unconditional. The restoration of relational proximity follows genuine repentance.

> **Ephesians 4:26--27**
>
> "*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.*"

Paul's instruction — 'let not the sun go down upon your wrath' — establishes the urgency of addressing unresolved anger before it becomes entrenched bitterness. The window between legitimate anger at genuine wrong and the hardening of that anger into bitterness is not infinite.

The believer who allows anger to remain unaddressed — who goes to sleep with it, wakes up with it, carries it through days and weeks without releasing it before God — is giving place to the devil.

Unforgiveness is not a neutral state; it is an active invitation to the enemy to establish a foothold in the life of the one who refuses to release what has been done to them.

3.4 Forgiveness and Justice

The release of forgiveness does not require the abandonment of justice.

These are not the same category and must not be conflated. Forgiveness operates in the domain of the personal relationship between the forgiver and the offender — the debt between two persons before God. Justice operates in the domain of societal accountability for harmful acts — the protection of the innocent and the ordering of human society.

The believer who has genuinely forgiven the person who committed a crime against them is not obligated to refuse to cooperate with legal proceedings against that person. The two acts are compatible. Reporting a crime to civil authorities, cooperating with investigation and prosecution, and pursuing legal remedies for civil wrongs are all entirely consistent with genuine personal forgiveness. Romans 13:1--4 establishes civil government as God's appointed instrument for punishing evil and rewarding good. Forgiveness releases the personal debt; it does not abolish the legitimate function of civil accountability.

Chapter Four: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

Matthew 18:23--35 is the most complete treatment of forgiveness in Christ's teaching. Its structure — a great debt forgiven, a small debt refused, the consequence of that refusal — is the theology of forgiveness stated in narrative form. It deserves examination in full.

4.1 The Narrative

> **Matthew 18:23--35**

> *"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desoughtest me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."*

4.2 The Arithmetic of the Parable

Ten thousand talents was approximately 200,000 years of a laborer's wages — a debt deliberately set at an impossible-to-repay scale to represent the infinite moral debt of human sin before God. A hundred pence was approximately 100 days' wages — a real debt, not trivial, but finite and manageable. The ratio between the two debts is roughly 600,000 to 1. This is not poetic exaggeration; it is the actual moral arithmetic of the situation

between God and the sinner, and between any two human beings who have wronged each other.

The servant whose ten-thousand-talent debt was cancelled and who then strangled his fellow servant over a hundred pence has not merely behaved inconsistently. He has demonstrated that he never understood what was done for him. A person who has genuinely comprehended the scale of their own forgiveness cannot, in that same comprehension, refuse to release the incomparably smaller debt owed by another. The refusal to forgive is therefore not only a moral failure; it is diagnostic of a failure to have genuinely received what the gospel offers.

4.3 The Consequence: Delivered to the Tormentors

Christ's conclusion is severe: 'So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.' The phrase 'delivered to the tormentors' describes the spiritual consequences of sustained unforgiveness in the life of the believer. The New Testament does not present these consequences as hypothetical; they are the predictable, consistent fruit of a life in which bitterness has been chosen over release.

The tormentors of unforgiveness are not external; they are the internal spiritual consequences of the choice: the corruption of prayer, the erosion of peace, the hardening of the heart toward God, the progressive incapacity for genuine love, the defilement that spreads to others (Hebrews 12:15). The person who refuses to forgive has not merely lost the benefit of restored relationship; they have chosen to live in a prison of their own construction, tended by tormentors they invited in through the door of their own unforgiveness.

Part Two: Rewards and the Judgment of Works

Chapter Five: Two Different Judgments

The New Testament describes two distinct future judgments that must be carefully distinguished. Conflating them produces either false security or unnecessary despair — neither of which serves the believer well.

The distinction preserves both the absolute assurance of salvation grounded in Christ and the genuine accountability of every believer's life and labor before God.

5.1 The Judgment Seat of Christ: For Believers

> **2 Corinthians 5:10**
>
> "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*"
>
> **Romans 14:10, 12**
>
> "*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ... So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*"

The Greek bema (βῆμα) — translated 'judgment seat' — was the raised platform from which a judge or military commander rendered decisions, evaluated performance, and awarded prizes in athletic competitions.

Paul's use of the bema image for the believer's future accounting before Christ captures both the evaluation and the reward dimensions of what is coming. Every believer will stand there. Every believer will give account. What is evaluated is not whether the person is saved — that was settled at

the cross and confirmed in the new birth. What is evaluated is the quality of the life and labor built upon the foundation of salvation.

5.2 The Great White Throne: For the Unbelieving

> **Revelation 20:11--12**
>
> *"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."*

The Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20 is categorically different from the bema judgment. Those who stand before it are 'the dead, small and great' — those not written in the book of life. The books that are opened contain the record of their works. This is the judgment that determines eternal destiny, not the quality of a saved person's labor. The believer whose name is written in the book of life does not appear at the Great White Throne in the sense of standing under its verdict regarding eternal destiny. The two judgments are distinct events for distinct populations with distinct outcomes.

5.3 The Foundation and the Structure

> **1 Corinthians 3:11--15**
>
> *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built*

> *thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*"

Paul's metaphor separates two things with precision:

- The foundation: Jesus Christ, the only foundation that can be laid. Salvation rests on the foundation alone. The person whose work is entirely consumed by fire — 'he shall suffer loss' — is still saved, because the foundation is intact. Works do not purchase salvation, and their loss does not revoke it.
- The structure: what is built upon the foundation. This is what the fire tests. The quality of the structure — gold, silver, precious stones vs. wood, hay, stubble — determines the degree of reward, not the fact of salvation. The distinction is not between those who are saved and those who are not. It is between believers who built with durable materials and those who built with combustible ones. Both are saved; the fire distinguishes their rewards. This truth must be held alongside the apostasy warnings — not as a contradiction, but as addressing different questions:

  > **The bema judgment asks —** How well did the believer build? What quality of work did they produce upon the foundation? What will survive the fire?
  >
  > **The apostasy warnings ask —** Is the believer still building? Are they still on the foundation, still walking in the Spirit, still pursuing holiness? Or have they turned away?

Both questions call the same person to the same response: maximum diligence in their labor for God, sustained by persevering faith.

Chapter Six: What Survives the Fire

The fire of God's judgment is the ultimate criterion for the value of every work done in the body. The question that should govern every decision a

believer makes about how to invest their time, their gifts, their resources, and their energy is not 'will this be approved by my peers?' but 'will this survive the fire of God's judgment?' The two questions produce different answers surprisingly often.

6.1 What the Fire Consumes: Wood, Hay, Stubble

Wood, hay, and stubble are combustible materials — useful in some contexts, but unable to withstand fire. They represent works that have the appearance of Christian service but are built from the wrong materials:

- Works done for reputation: the sermon crafted for applause, the public act of generosity designed to be noticed, the position taken in debate to win the argument rather than to state the truth. Matthew 6:1--6 is Christ's direct teaching on works done for human recognition: 'They have their reward.' The fire of God's judgment will not reward what has already been rewarded by human approval.
- Works done for personal ambition: ministry pursued for the platform it provides, teaching accepted for the influence it confers, leadership sought for the authority it bestows. 3 John 9 provides the New Testament's most pointed portrait of this failure: Diotrephes, 'who loveth to have the preeminence,' did not receive the apostolic brothers, spoke malicious words, and refused to allow those who would to receive them. The preeminence-seeker's work will not survive the fire.
- Works done out of fear rather than faith: obedience motivated by the desire to avoid punishment or loss, giving motivated by the fear of the curse, ministry performed to maintain institutional standing. Hebrews 11:6 — 'without faith it is impossible to please him' — establishes faith as the condition under which works have value before God. Fear-motivated compliance may produce the appearance of faithful service; it will not produce the substance.

6.2 What the Fire Refines: Gold, Silver, Precious Stones

Gold, silver, and precious stones survive fire — and are refined by it. They represent works of durable spiritual substance:

- Works grounded in Scripture: teaching, decision-making, and pastoral action that flows from careful, honest engagement with the Word of God. The minister who handles the Word with precision, who corrects their own conclusions when the text demands it, who teaches what is true rather than what is popular — that work is grounded in a material the fire cannot consume.
- Works done in faith: the act taken not because the outcome was secure but because the Word of God commanded it. Abraham offering Isaac. The Jerusalem church selling possessions. Paul preaching in cities where he had been driven out before. Faith-motivated action — costly, uncertain, undertaken because God commanded it — is gold.
- Works motivated by love: 1 Corinthians 13:1--3 establishes that any work, however spectacular — tongues of men and angels, prophecy, knowledge of all mysteries, self-sacrifice — without love is nothing. The love of God and the love of neighbor is the only motivation that will survive the fire, because it is the only motivation that shares the nature of the God who judges.

6.3 The Apostasy Warnings and the Preservation Texts

The New Testament holds two sets of texts in deliberate tension:

The Apostasy Warnings

> **Hebrews 6:4--6**
>
> "*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew*

> *them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*"
>
> **Galatians 5:4**
>
> "*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*"

These passages are addressed to genuine believers and treat the possibility of falling away as real, serious, and not automatically reversed. They must be held as the apostles wrote them, without the interpretive moves that reduce them to hypothetical scenarios about non-genuine believers.

The Preservation Texts

> **John 10:28--29**
>
> "*And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*"
>
> **Philippians 1:6**
>
> "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*"

These passages are equally genuine and equally apostolic. God's preserving power is real. His faithfulness to complete what he begins is the ground of the believer's confidence. The believer's security is not hypothetical.

The Balanced Posture

The two sets of texts address different questions and call the same person to the same posture: neither presumption nor despair, but persevering faith expressed in continued obedience. The apostasy warnings guard against presumption — the assumption that because one was once genuinely converted, no present faithfulness is required. The preservation texts guard against despair — the assumption that a single failure, a single period of

weakness, or the full weight of one's past disqualifies the genuine believer from God's faithfulness.

The person who reads the apostasy warnings with genuine fear for their own standing before God, and who allows that fear to drive them back to the cross, back to the Spirit, back to the apostolic standard — that person has read them correctly. The person who reads them and concludes that they are already lost has not yet read the preservation texts. Both are needed. Both are true. Both call to the same destination: steady, continuing, faith-driven obedience.

Chapter Seven: Objections

7.1 On Forgiveness

'Forgiveness Requires Forgetting'

OBJECTION:

> "*Genuine forgiveness means forgetting what was done. If you still remember the offense, you haven't truly forgiven.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** Scripture nowhere commands the forgetting of offenses as the criterion of genuine forgiveness. The phrase 'forgive and forget' is not in the Bible. What Scripture commands is the release of the debt — the abandonment of the right to pursue payment — not the erasure of memory. God himself 'remembers our sins no more' (Hebrews 10:17) in the sense of not holding them against us in judgment; this is a covenant promise about his judicial disposition, not a claim that the omniscient God has erased information.

The person who forgave a genuine wrong and still carries the memory of it has not failed to forgive. They are human. Memory is not bitterness; the continued existence of the memory of a wrong is not evidence that the debt

has not been released. What matters is not whether the memory is present but what the person does with it when it arises: whether they re-litigate the debt or release it again before God.

'I Can't Forgive Until They Apologize'

OBJECTION:

> "*Forgiveness should be conditional on genuine repentance. It dishonors the wrong that was done to forgive someone who has never acknowledged it.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** Luke 17:3--4 distinguishes between the internal release of bitterness (unconditional, immediately commanded) and the restoration of relational trust (conditional on repentance, a process). The internal act of forgiveness — releasing the debt before God, refusing to harbor bitterness, relinquishing the right to demand payment — is not conditional on the offender's response. Christ forgave from the cross while those who crucified him were still crucifying him: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34).

Withholding the internal release of bitterness until the offender apologizes does not honor the wrong that was done. It extends its damage into the forgiver's own life indefinitely, making the forgiver's peace hostage to the offender's future choices. The apostle Paul was beaten, imprisoned, stoned, and abandoned by some of those he served. He did not withhold internal forgiveness pending their apologies. He pressed toward the mark and trusted God with the accounting.

7.2 On Rewards and Judgment

'Once Saved, Always Saved — The Apostasy Warnings Are Hypothetical'

OBJECTION:

> "*The apostasy warnings in Hebrews and Galatians describe hypothetical scenarios about people who were never genuinely saved, not genuine believers. A truly saved person cannot lose their salvation.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** The argument requires the interpreter to know more about the condition of the people addressed than the texts themselves claim. Hebrews 6:4--6 describes people who 'were once enlightened,' 'have tasted of the heavenly gift,' 'were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,' and 'have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.' The attempt to read these as descriptions of merely apparent or superficial conversion requires those words to mean considerably less than they appear to mean. The canonical witness standard of this manual requires that both the apostasy warnings and the preservation texts be honored in their full force, held in tension, and allowed to produce the posture of persevering faith rather than the false security of presumption or the false despair of hopelessness.

'All My Works Will Be Burned — There's No Point Trying'

OBJECTION:

> "*Knowing that my works will be tested and may be found wanting, I despair of ever producing anything that will survive. The judgment seat feels like condemnation, not reward.*"
>
> **ANSWER:** This is precisely the posture the preservation texts are designed to prevent. The purpose of the bema judgment is

> not condemnation but evaluation and reward. The person who builds with gold, silver, and precious stones — whose works are Scripture-grounded, faith-driven, and love-motivated — will receive a reward. That possibility is not closed to any believer who genuinely turns to the Spirit's work in their life.

Furthermore, the believer who recognizes that past work was largely wood, hay, and stubble is not without recourse. They have not yet stood before the fire. The present moment is always the opportunity to begin building differently — with better materials, from better motivations, grounded in the Word, empowered by the Spirit. The judgment seat is future. The opportunity to build for it is now.

Chapter Eight: Technical Reference and Study Guide

8.1 Greek Terms

> ***Aphiemi (ἀφίημι) —*** to release, to let go, to dismiss — the primary Greek word for forgiveness; drawn from commercial law: the release of a debtor from an obligation
>
> ***Apolusis (ἀπόλυσις) —*** release, liberation — used in Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14 for redemption through Christ's blood; the noun form of the same releasing action
>
> ***Charizomai (χαρίζομαι) —*** to graciously give, to freely bestow — used in Colossians 3:13 and Ephesians 4:32 for the forgiveness of believers toward one another, as God for Christ's sake has forgiven them; emphasizes the grace dimension
>
> ***Bema (βῆμα) —*** judgment seat, raised platform — used in 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10 for the believer's future accounting before Christ; a platform for evaluation and reward, not condemnation

***Dokimazo (δοκιμάζω)* —** to test, to prove by testing, to assay — used for the testing of works by fire; the same word used in Book Seven for the self-examination commanded in 2 Corinthians 13:5

***Pikria (πικρία)* —** bitterness — from pikros (sharp, cutting); used in Ephesians 4:31 and Hebrews 12:15; the spiritual toxin that grows from unforgiveness and defiles those around it

***Orge (ὀργή)* —** wrath, settled anger — the word used in Ephesians 4:26--27; distinguished from thymos (passionate outburst) by its settled, abiding quality; the thing Paul commands be put away before sunset

***Rhiza pikrias (ῥίζα πικρίας)* —** root of bitterness — Hebrews 12:15; the underground, spreading nature of unforgiveness that troubles and defiles many; not a surface-level emotion but a deeply rooted spiritual condition

8.2 The Two Judgments: Summary

The Bema (Judgment Seat of Christ) — 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12. For believers. Evaluates the quality of works built upon the foundation. Determines degree of reward. Does not determine salvation. The foundation (Christ) remains; the structure is tested.

The Great White Throne — Revelation 20:11--15. For the unbelieving dead. Evaluates works. The book of life determines eternal destiny. Those not written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire.

8.3 Building Materials: What Survives and What Burns

Gold, Silver, Precious Stones — Works Scripture-grounded, faith-driven, love-motivated. Done for God's glory rather than

human approval. Costly, persistent, spiritually substantive. Survive and are refined by the fire. Reward follows.

Wood, Hay, Stubble — Works reputation-driven, ambition-motivated, fear-based, or love-absent. May have the appearance of spiritual service. Cannot survive the fire. Loss follows, though the person themselves is saved.

8.4 Study Guide

Chapter One — Forgiveness Defined

1. What does aphiemi mean? Where is the word drawn from, and what does that background tell us about the nature of forgiveness?
2. The parable of Matthew 18:23-35 establishes a ratio between the debt God has forgiven us and the debt others owe us. What is the approximate ratio, and why does Christ make it so extreme?
3. Paul grounds the command to forgive in Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13 in the same reality. What is it? How does it function as both motivation and measure?
4. (Advanced) Forgiveness is described as absorbing the loss rather than extracting it from the offender. How does this dimension of forgiveness illuminate the theology of the atonement? What does God absorb at the cross that he does not extract from the sinner?

Chapter Two — What Forgiveness Is Not

5. What are the four things forgiveness is not? For each one, identify the pastoral situation in which the distortion is most likely to be applied harmfully.
6. God forgave David and then Nathan delivered the full account of the consequences David would bear (2 Samuel 12:9-13). What does this tell us about the relationship between forgiveness and natural consequences?

7. How is genuine forgiveness compatible with wise self-protection? What would you say to a person who believes that forgiving an abuser means returning to the abusive situation?
8. (Advanced) Forgiveness is not automatic pardon of ongoing willful sin. How does this principle apply to the pastoral handling of repeated patterns of harmful behavior within the covenant community?

Chapter Three — Internal Release and Restored Relationship

9. What is the distinction between internal forgiveness and restored relationship? Which is unconditional, and which is conditional on repentance?
10. Describe what the 'root of bitterness' image in Hebrews 12:15 teaches about the nature of unforgiveness. How does the root metaphor capture what makes bitterness different from ordinary anger?
11. Ephesians 4:26-27 says 'let not the sun go down upon your wrath.' What does Paul mean, and what spiritual danger does he identify in allowing anger to remain unaddressed?
12. (Advanced) How does the distinction between forgiveness and justice prevent a false choice between forgiving a serious wrong and pursuing accountability through legitimate civil channels?

Chapter Four — The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

13. Ten thousand talents versus one hundred pence: what is the approximate ratio between the two debts in Matthew 18:23-35? What does this arithmetic establish about the moral relationship between the debt God has forgiven and any debt owed to us by another person?
14. What does the unforgiving servant's behavior reveal about his understanding of what was done for him? Why does the refusal to forgive function as a diagnostic indicator about the condition of the heart?
15. (Advanced) Christ says the unforgiving servant was 'delivered to the tormentors.' What are the tormentors of unforgiveness identified in this chapter? In what sense is the prison of unforgiveness self-constructed?

Chapters Five and Six — Rewards and Judgment

16. What is the difference between the bema judgment and the Great White Throne? For whom is each one, and what does each one evaluate?
17. The foundation and the structure in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 are distinct. What does this distinction preserve about the relationship between salvation and works?
18. What are the three categories of combustible work (wood, hay, stubble) identified in Chapter Six? Give one contemporary example of each.
19. (Advanced) The apostasy warnings and the preservation texts both belong to the apostolic canon and must both be honored. How do you hold them in tension without either reducing the warnings to hypotheticals or treating the preservation texts as inapplicable to genuine believers? What posture does the tension produce?

Chapter Seven — Objections

20. The 'forgive and forget' objection claims that genuine forgiveness requires erasing the memory of the offense. What does Scripture actually command? What is the difference between carrying a memory and re-litigating the debt?
21. The conditional forgiveness objection argues that the internal release of bitterness should be withheld until the offender apologizes. What distinction does Luke 17:3-4 draw between internal forgiveness and the restoration of relational trust? What does Christ's prayer from the cross (Luke 23:34) establish about the timing of internal forgiveness?
22. The 'once saved, always saved' objection reads the apostasy warnings as hypothetical descriptions of people who were never genuinely saved. What four phrases does Hebrews 6:4-6 use to describe the people being addressed? Why do these phrases make the hypothetical reading difficult to sustain?
23. (Advanced) The despair objection responds to the bema judgment with resignation: if past works may be burned, building for the future is pointless. What is the answer? What does the present moment always represent in relation to the judgment seat?

The Concluding Charge

What follows is the Concluding Charge from the Master Volume of the Scriptural Instruction Manual — reproduced here without addition or alteration as the final word of the series. It is addressed to three distinct readers. Every person who has read this far belongs to at least one of them.

To the Ordained Minister

> *You stand in an office of supreme gravity. What you teach shapes the eternity of those in your care. No eloquence, no academic credential, no institutional authority, and no spiritual gift exempts you from the requirement to handle the Word of God with precision and with fear. Return to it daily. Let it correct you before you use it to correct others. Preach it in season and out of season — when it is welcome and when it is not.*

To the Scholar and Student

> *The academy's task is not merely to catalog the history of interpretation but to pursue truth. Every critical tool — textual, linguistic, historical — is a servant of the text, not its master. The most brilliant exegesis that leaves the reader without a living encounter with the God of the text has produced literature, not theology. Let your scholarship be animated by reverence and your learning governed by obedience.*

To Every Reader

> *The church's greatest need in every generation is not novelty. It is fidelity. The world does not need a church that sounds like itself; it needs a church that sounds like its Lord. And its Lord speaks through his Word — written, inspired, sufficient, and indestructible.*

> **Isaiah 40:8**
>
> "*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*"

A Final Note

> *All doctrinal positions in this manual are intended to be tested — not accepted on the authority of this volume, but verified against the full counsel of Scripture by the reader.*

A Scriptural Instruction Manual

Complete Series • Books One through Twelve Book One: How to Build Doctrine — The Scripture-First Method Book Two: The Oneness of God and the Identity of Jesus Christ Book Three: The Problem of Sin and the Function of the Law Book Four: Salvation — What It Is, How It Is Received, How It Is Kept, and How It Must Be Taught Book Five: Water Baptism Under the New Covenant — What Christ Commanded, What the Apostles Did Book Six: The Gift of the Holy Ghost Book Seven: Holiness, Sanctification, and Self-Examination Book Eight: Church Order, Discipline, and Ministry Roles Book Nine: The Lord's Supper and Corporate Unity Book Ten: Biblical Marriage and Family Order Book Eleven: Stewardship, Giving, and Separation

Book Twelve: Forgiveness, Rewards, and the Judgment to Come

— Soli Deo Gloria —